

A

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, May 17. 1711.

IN Obedience to the Importunity of the Town, I am brought on from one Step to another, to speak again of the Affairs of the *17 Proprietary of British Visions*, which I mentioned some Time ago — The Variety of People's Thoughts on that Subject is great; some think I have treat'd it with too much Levity, some with too much Gravity; some think I have put too much weight on it, some too little; some think I should have put no weight at all upon it, and say, I have put the Reputation of my Judgment to the Stake for it; some, that it deserves great and awful Thoughts — And these Contradicting Opinions, I

am not to expect to reconcile, they are all at Liberty to say and think as they please.

However, to set all to Rights in the Case as near as I can, I shall first set my self to Rights in the Judgments of those, who being seriously inclin'd, expect it from me; and to this End, I shall give my own Thoughts on the Thing in General, and this may not only justify the Notice I have taken of the Book in particular, but tend to set some right in the Judgments they ought to make of such Things for the future — This I do, that I neither may be thought myself (or Encourage any other) either to Ridicule any forerunning Notices of God's

Judg-

Judgments in the World, or put too great a Weight on the Produce of distemper'd Heads, or enconrage Enthusiaſtick Boldnesses in this Uniuſpir'd, but pretending Age.

To do this seriously, I shall say but little to the Book itſelf — I cannot say I am pleas'd, that I have ſaid ſo much, not that I have given juſt Ground for it, but because I ſee ſome People making an ill uſe of it.

The conſidering Reader of the Book, may evidently ſee there are two Strains in it — One the Prediſor, who ventures to ſay Things of great Conſequence — The other the Writer or Methodizer, for Publication, which ſeem, in a Preface particularly, to cover or colour the Substance, with an Air of Banter, Ridicule, and I know not what — Borrows a Name formerly Jeſted with in the World; pretends to the great Age of a Person who is really no Body; talks of a ſecond Sight, and much ſuch kind of Stuff, perfectly wild and wide from the main Design.

This was certainly done from ſome of theſe Views; 1. A diſſenſe perhaps of the Things ſpoken of — Nor has it been altogether unusual, that Men may have been preſeſ'd to ſay what they durſt not own they had a full Revealion of; or 2. To cover the ſerious part a little from the Eye of every Reader, that it might not have ſo ſolemn an Aspect till it went a greater length; or 3. To fit the Thing to the loose Humour of the Age, who ſometimes muſt have a light loose Way taken with them, to Introduce more ſerious Things to their Reading — Or 4. Merely to make the Book vulgar, and make the Publication of it eaſie to the Booksellers, or ſome ſuch mean Views, which I cannot Ac- count for.

When I firſt look'd on this Book with any Attention, indeed I could eaſily throw by all the Froth and Levity, as above, and I own, I read ſome other Part of it with ſome ſeriousneſs — Whether I am cenſur'd or approv'd in it, is not muſch Mate- rial to the Caſe in Hand.

But I now come to give my Thoughts in the general, upon the Matter of the Thing

itſelf, call'd Humane Predition, laying the Book and its Author, wholly by, as if no ſuch Thing had ever been — I am none of thoſe that are apt, by poring on Futurities, to fill my Head with Whym-ſical Notions, that Dream of Inſpirations, and fancy themſelves on the other ſide of Time; that call strong Imagination Re- velation, and every Wind of the Brain an impulse of the Spirit; and this I meant, when I ſaid formerly that I am no Enthusiaſt, knowing at the ſame Time, that the true and Original Meaning of the Word En- thusiaſm, was Divine Inſpiration; and that, as a Letter I have by me from an Ingenious Stranger hints very well, that the Learned Spencer ſpeaks, and yet not Prophanely, of the Enthusiaſms of Jesus Christ — But as I am ſpeaking in Modern Phrase, I may be allow'd to uſe Words in the common Ac- ceptation — And indeed every Author ought always to be understood ſo, unless he explain himſelf otherwife; but thinking the Way.

But now as, I ſay, on the one Hand, that I am no Enthusiaſt in the ſeſe above, ſo I am not of the Opinion, that all Premoni- tions of Things to come, are to be slighted and rejected; I am no Pretender to Pro- phesy, nor Liftner to every one that does ſo, yet I cannot believe that all Predition is entirely to be Condemn'd — I am no Dreamer of Dreams, and yet I dare not ſay that all Dreams are to be entirely diſregarded, or absolutely conclude, that no Man is now warned of God in a Dream, as has been formerly; and I humbly pray all ſerious People that call themſelves Chriſtians, and that have Charity to judge Impartiallly, and Judgment to diſtinguih between Things idly Suggested, and Things ſerious, Deba- ted — to hear me with Calmnes.

I firſt believe, and have had ſuch con- vincing Testimonies of it, that I muſt be a confirm'd Atheiſt if I did not — A Con- verſe of Spirits, I mean between thoſe un- imbodyed, and thoſe call'd Soul, or incas'd in Flesh — Whether the firſt Ad in their Pre-exiſtent State, or otherwise, I think (and am thankful for it) is as needless, as it is imposſible to know; but that ſuch a Con- verſe

verse of Spirits is in Nature, I say, I am fully satisfy'd; from whence else, come all those private Notices, strong Impulses, pressings of Spirit, involuntary Joy, Sadness, and foreboding Apprehensions, and the like, OF, and ABOUT Things immediately and really attending us, and this in the most momentous Articles of our Lives

That there are such Things, I think I need not go about to prove; I never yet found the Man or Woman of any common Thought, but would witness to them— And I believe they are, next to the Scripture, some of the best and most undeniable Evidences of a Future Existence: It would be endless to fill this Paper with the Testimonies Learned and Pious Men of all Ages, have given to this; I could add to them a Volume of my own Experiences, some of them so strange, as would shock your belief; tho' I could produce such Proofs as would Convince any Man — I have had, perhaps, a greater variety of Changes, Accidents, and Disasters in my short and unhappy Life, than any Man, *at least than most Men* alive; yet I had never any considerable Mischief or Disaster attending me, but sleeping or waking I have had Notice of it before-hand, and had I listened to these Notices, I believe might have shun'd the Evil — *Let no Man think this a jest* — I seriously acknowledge, and I do believe, my neglects of these Notices have been my great Injury, and since I have ceased to neglect them, I have been guided to avoid even Snare's laid for my Life, by no other Knowledge of them, than by such Notices and Warnings — And more than that, have been guided by them to discover even the Fact and the Persons.

I acknowledge, that the *very* Time, Persons, Circumstances, &c. of such Things, have been in this manner discover'd to me — I have living Witness to produce, to whom I have told the Particulars in the very Moment, and who have been so affected with them, as that they have pres'd me to avoid the Danger, to retire, to keep myself up, and the like — Whose Advice, if I had not as well as the Notice aforesaid, entirely neglected, I believe, as I said a-

bove; I had been safe; which omitting and slighting, I went on, and have fallen into the Pit, exactly as describ'd to me — And to any one that thinks it useful, I shall descend to Particulars, which I avoid here only, as being a private Case, I think it not so Material.

What profitable Inferences may be drawn from every Man's Experiences in these Things, I leave out here, as having not Room for them — *Sub i mean*, as may confirm the Existence State of the Invisible World; the certainty of futurity, and above all, the Government of Providence, the Prescience, Omiscience, and Goodness, as well as Being of a God, and the like; These are Subjects too great for this Paper, but those that can improve the Hint, will, I hope, accept of it.

But I bring them down to my present Case, thus — If such NOTICES, &c. by whatsoever Hand, or to whatsoever purpose are given us, in our personal, private, and particular Cases, as I believe no Body will deny — Why may not the same Providence and Power permit the like Notices, call them what you will, or be they given by whatsoever Hand, to be given to some Persons in Matters Publick and National,

History is full of these, and were I not at the Writing of this, absent from Books, (being now Travelling, and at an Inn on the Road) I could bring a Numerous Roll of Quotations — But by my Memory, I may refer you to some — First, the famous Mr. Wishart, the first glorious Martyr for the Reformation in Scotland, burnt in the Square of the Palace or Castle, at St. Andrews; the Arch-Bishop coming out into his Balcony, to feed his Eyes with the Sight of his Torments, and Insulting him at the Time of his Death — When turning to the Bishop he told him from the Stake, That within a certain Time he should be Murther'd in the same Place, and his Naked Body be cast over that very Balcony, in which he then stood, into the Pavement, which actually and literally came to pass as he had foretold — This I refer for, to the History of that Time.

Mr

Mr. Bradford, Martyr in Queen Mary's Time, had Notice of the Resolutions taken for his Burning, the Night before, and to the very Particulars of buying the Chain he was to be Bound with, as may be seen in Mr. Fox.

Another of the Martyrs we read of, whose Name I forget, who on the Rack, was made entirely sensible of any Pain, and dreamt, if it be reasonable to call it a Dream, that a Man in white with a Linnen Cloth stood by him, wiplog the Sweat off from his Face.

Mr. John Knox, Mr. Calvin, Mr. Luther, and the Famous Buchanan, had all of them Eminent Passages of this kind, and yet we do not call any of them Prophets or Enthusiasticks.

I might mention here, the Notices given by such Hints to many People, of the Destruction of Jerusalem, mention'd by Josephus: The like of the Fire of London particularly foretold by Mr. Withers, then a Prisoner in the Tower, six or ten Year before it hapned, and many other.

I might descend to Dreams, &c. But I am very wary and cautious of this, because of the other Extreme, into which many, even good People are apt to run. — We have in the Scripture several Instances of Men being warn'd of God in a Dream. I say no more to it than this. We are not told that God has been please'd to cease giving any Warning to Men in their Dreams; nor is that Soriety to be taken by Expositors, in any sense, that is judicious. so such a Notion as this, Job 33. 15, 16, 17.

In a Dream, in a Vision of the Night, when deep Sleep fallath upon Men, in slumbrings upon the Bed.

Then be openeth the Bars of Steel, and sealeth their Instructions.

That he may withdraw Man from his purpose, and hide pride from Man.

Mr. Poel in his Annotations, says, this is meant of the Warnings God it pleas'd to give Men, to keep them from Executing those Evil Works which possibly they purpos'd to do.

Job in another Case, Expresses his disturbances in his Dreams to be from God; *I HO U: scarest me with Dreams, and terrifiest me with Visions*, Job 7. 14. Joseph's and Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams are without Objection in this Case — And Daniel's Words to the King of Babylon are remarkable — *Thy Thoughts, O King, came into thy Mind, upon thy Bed, and he that Revealeth Secrets, sh. letth known unto thee what shall come to pass.* Dan. 2. 29. — Again, Joseph was warn'd of God in a Dream, and the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a Dream; Pilate's Wife suffer'd many Things in a Dream, because of the Sentence going to be pass'd on our Lord; I might look into Prophane History, to the Dream, for such I take it to be of Brutus at Philippi; the Dream of Caesar's Wife, and many others.

But I refrain this, purely on Account of these Poor dis temper'd People, who, running into the other Extreme, are always Dreaming and interpreting — And even Dream that they are Dreaming, till they d sofer their Heads, and the Heads of those about them, whose Errors, however I pity, yet I cannot from thence reject all the warnings God is pleasd to give us in the Visitations of the Night — I wish heartily I knew how far I might go between the Extremes, and to sh. you a Rule to walk by, between over-much, and too little regarding of Dreams, then I should say much more than I dare do now, being afraid I should be accessory to any of the frequent Mistakes about this Matter,

I shall say something of Prediction, second Sight, and Revelation, in my notes on this Subject.

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